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27 APR 1967

MEMORANDUM FOR: The Honorable Robert S. McNamara  
The Secretary of Defense

SUBJECT : Servicing of Vietnam Assessment Requests

1. On 21 April 1967, you requested us to organize groups of analysts to provide, on a continuing basis, periodic assessments of (1) the effectiveness of U.S. air operations against North Vietnam, (2) the progress of pacification in South Vietnam and, (3) the order of battle of Communist forces engaged in the Vietnamese struggle. You also requested that we address ourselves to the data problems involved in framing these assessments. In complying with these requests, I know you understand that what we are undertaking is an audit and not a bookkeeping responsibility.

2. Since it is hardly possible to assess the effectiveness of any program without some reference to the objectives, ranked in priority order, which that program is supposed to accomplish, we will base our continuing assessment of the effectiveness of aerial operations against North Vietnam on the assumption that those operations' primary objectives are (per the Department of State's 25 April 1967 Circular Telegram No. 182210): (1) to limit, or raise the cost of, sending men and supplies to South Vietnam and (2) to make North Vietnam pay a price for its aggression against the south. Any net judgments on what is being accomplished by continuing the aerial pressure campaign will also have to take into consideration the political and military consequences of stopping it, since this program's existence is now a significant element in the overall Vietnamese equation. (The question of

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whether there is a net advantage to continuing the aerial pressure campaign is quite different from the question of whether there was a net advantage to starting it.) The political and military consequences of cessation will also be kept under continuing review.

3. With the adoption of the Hamlet Evaluation Grid and the improved reporting procedures the Office of Civil Operations is now developing, we are hopeful of being able to give you reasonably reliable continuing assessments on the progress of pacification.

4. The order of battle question is the one on which we anticipate the most difficulty in providing a continuing audit. The books must be kept in Saigon, not Washington, and are the proper responsibility of MACV. What we will try to do is keep the methodology and procedure employed under continuing scrutiny and endeavor, in concert with our military colleagues, to resolve the many data acquisition, interpretation and presentation problems involved in this complex subject.

5. Please let me know whether the procedures and concepts outlined above are adequate to meet your needs and requirements. I am sure you recognize the delicacy of our making unilateral judgments on matters in which the military components of the U.S. Government have legitimate interests and, in some cases, primary operational responsibility.

Richard Helms  
Director

cc: The Honorable Cyrus R. Vance  
The Deputy Secretary of Defense

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